

**Lending/Foundation Community Planning Session
October 16, 2001**

General Comments on the Overall Strategy :

- How does the plan address homeless and special needs housing? The County is backing away from their involvement/coordination of these programs, and City participation is needed.
- The plan is long overdue. How where the numeric goals for new housing units arrived at?
- What is the timeline for completion of the plan?
- Does the plan imply that the City is going to increase their demolition activity?
- Great ambitious plan. Economic development and the school system need to be addressed.
- We should take the word “public” out of public housing – it has a negative connotation.
- Is the plan for everyone, or just City Department’s?
- CBO’s may feel threatened, need to be careful that the plan isn’t perceived as cutting them out.
- Will the plan guide resources (in particular, CDBG money)?
- When the City issues RFP’s for dollars, they should be directed toward goals identified in the strategy. (HUD comment)
- The City should look at establishing an affordable housing trust fund.
- Terminology in the plan should be defined, e.g. “affordable,” “assisted,” etc.
- Would like to see more of the background data and statistical information that was looked at as the plan was being developed.
- Tracking information will be helpful going forward.
- Have we looked at what other cities are doing?

Community Groups Planning Session October 25, 2001

How can the Community Based organizations help implement the Housing Strategy?

- The County can assist with homeless issues
- Silver Spring Neighborhood House can provide TA and supportive services
- Help with marketing the proper image of various neighborhoods; welcome wagon, neighborhood tours, be the eyes and ears of the neighborhood, serve as a point of reference for each neighborhood.
- The Fair Housing Council can serve as one-stop-shop for housing info and can help lenders with CRA issues thereby helping to maximize resources (Strategy 5)
- “Deconstruction” should be evaluated as a means to assist with demolition, job creation, and increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Will this strategy help community based organizations? If not how should it be changed?

- There should be more emphasis on affordable housing
- There should be better enforcement of property registration
- The quality of affordable housing needs to be improved
- Habitat should be encouraged to build in other areas of the City
- There needs to more attention paid to accommodating larger families

What are ways to help implement the strategy?

- City should use neighborhood newsletters to get out information
- Require reporting on neighborhood issues and conditions (garbage, litter, housing. Conditions, board ups, etc.) as part of the CDBG requirements
- Cross promotion of social services info with housing and related program info
- There is a disconnect between NSP and DCD planning process
- CDBG needs to be brought into this process and better coordinate project funding with planning that is being done.
- Use churches
- Use alternative media (grocery store fliers, TV guide things, various free mailers and newspapers to get out the word on housing programs
- Work closely with the neighborhood school initiative
- Use block captains
- Involve employees of neighborhood companies/promote walk to work

1. How can the city better communicate available resources and tools to our neighborhoods?

- *Promote better understanding of City programs/department functions.*
 - Update program information.
 - Do a better job of marketing/providing information on city services. For example, enclose information on city services in tax bill envelopes --things people look at closely.

- Develop a resource guide.
 - Develop a complete guide of available resources to help rehab a house, report nuisance activity, file a complaint about a boarded property, fix-up a vacant lot.
 - Institute newsletters or updates noting new or changed policies and programs..
 - Ensure alderpersons are aware of current policies and programs.
 - Hold an annual meeting to share information.
 - Training sessions with multiple opportunities to supply information. (example: landlord training classes)
 - Possibly add the information to the orders that are issued.
 - Provide information in retail centers and businesses where the community gathers.
- *Improve the mechanisms for communicating with the public.*
 - Update City and department websites. Need better search tools and links and updated information.
 - Follow-up on complaint system: i.e., mechanism for someone to be able to see response to complaint in process (example: Post boarded house with inspection sticker or in-rem sticker.)
 - Put the City in neighborhood outposts (operate one day a week in different neighborhoods throughout the city).
 - Communicate/follow-up with citizens on their complaints--the citizens feel they do have some power to make changes in their areas.
 - Develop systems to share information with appraisers or assessors to reflect positive change in neighborhoods.
- 2. How can we increase citizen participation?**
- Encourage collaboration, networking and relationship building among agencies, businesses, churches, etc. The Block Grant process has pitted agencies against each other.
 - Need to reach the elderly to help them deal with their problems and educate them as to available services and resources. City reps should attend meetings at the senior citizen centers.
 - CLCs (Community Learning Centers) would be a good place to go to reach residents.
 - There are several MPS recreational listings. Maybe information could be sent out with those listings.
 - Get a more diverse work force working on the repairs-get the neighborhood people involved in doing the repairs so that their is a vested interest in the properties. Determine if people in the neighborhood have the skills to do the repairs)
 - Streamline the EOP.
 - Divide housing programs into residential rehab and new construction
 - There is a disagreement about the city's assessment of a property without considering the value of a property's use.
 - We need to make sure if there are plans to do a program that the program is followed through with so there isn't a sense of empty promises.

- Highlight the successes in the community rather than the bad news. The media has a role to play here.
- Go door-to-door. This is the responsibility of the community groups not the City.

3. How do we get input from neighborhoods without neighborhood programs

- Think outside the box. Target churches Lions Club and businesses.
- Work with the various neighborhood organizations that exist such as: Churches, Schools, Day-care centers, SDC.
- Involve organizations that border the areas to work as liaisons.

General comments

- Communication lines must open and remain open so that all housing resources can be easily accessed and not unnecessarily duplicated.
- The City's Housing Strategy should place more of an emphasis on low and middle income affordable housing.
- Implement special-needs housing for alcohol rehab, drug rehab, seniors, and people getting out of jail. These people need a certain type of environment to help with their situation.
- Offer Incentives to neighbors such as a residential BID (IRIZ)
- Explore property tax breaks (or other incentives) for owners who have properties that are in compliance with the codes.
- Improve the senior lending issues to allow seniors to stay in their homes.
- We might want to incorporate something into the document relating to assisting older homeowners in maintaining their homes.
- Speed up the in-rem process.
- Get MPS involved in this program-when children are moved from one area to another it not only impacts the schools but the neighborhood and the child.
- Strong partnerships with private sector funding sources must be forged in order to supplement limited public funds.
- Maintain vacant lots. (i.e., nice landscaping.)
- Increase market value of existing homes to the level of replacement newly constructed homes. (balance)
- Develop an equity insurance program.
- There should be a plan for the ultimate use of vacant lots.
- New construction on vacant lots--singles and duplexes.
- Home ownership % should be based on owner occupied single family and duplexes (not for example a 16 unit apartment building where the owner lives on-site)
- Is there a possibility of a REHAB code for owner occupants?
- Need some action steps to deal with board-ups. They could be tracked using COMPASS.
- Is there any way to stop landlords who already have properties with many building code violations from buying additional properties?
- There is a need for including some type of proactive intensive code enforcement in our neighborhoods.
- Institute stronger code enforcement.

- Penalize slum landlords.